

## Andover brainstorms budget solutions

Managers in Andover Town Hall have taken a brainstorming approach to closing a projected budget gap for fiscal 2004.

Senior and mid-level managers participated in a structured process designed to generate possible solutions to an estimated gap of \$5.5 million facing the town in the next fiscal year.

The "Brainstorming for a Balanced Budget" process was developed by Town Manager Buzz Stapczynski, his staff, and a consultant. The objective of the process is to identify practical ideas for closing the budget gap. Additionally, the process promotes team building and communication among managers during a difficult fiscal period.

When talking about major cutbacks, said Steve Bucuzzo, Andover's assistant town manager, there is a "high possibility of destroying the morale in town."

The three components of the process included soliciting and generating deficit reduction ideas, collecting and compiling the ideas, and finally prioritizing them, according to Bucuzzo.

The process was initiated with a letter from the town manager to all managers asking them to identify possible revenue enhancements, efficiencies and cost savings, and service reductions related to their own department as well as others they are familiar with.

"We went into the process with a lot of department heads apprehensive about

state cuts," said Bucuzzo.

The process, at least, gave "them a sense of stakeholding in the solutions," he said.

More than 160 anonymous suggestions were submitted to the town manager's office and compiled into a single document. This document was distributed to all participants before the group convened for a work session.

In order to evaluate the suggestions, two off-site work sessions attended by about 30 managers were led by the consultant.

Managers considered the merits and applicability of each idea and developed a list of the most promising ones. Finally, the managers agreed upon a list of action items for the upcoming fiscal 2004 budget process.

Some items are depart-

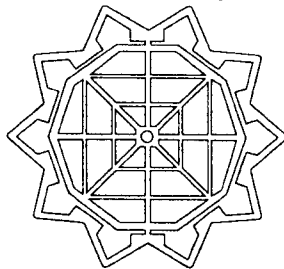
ment-specific in nature, others would have a more broad application. Andover officials did not want to share specific details until after the town manager's budget is released.

The process "offered a structured, fair, and conflict-free way for everyone to work cooperatively together toward addressing Andover's looming deficit situation," Stapczynski said.

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*If you know of a Mass Innovation that could be featured in this column, contact Katie Carroll at the MMA (phone: (800) 882-1498; fax: (617) 695-1314; e-mail: [Katherine\\_Carroll@mma.org](mailto:Katherine_Carroll@mma.org)).*

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